

Then & Now

Stories by
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Members of the community purchased war savings bonds meant to stimulate the economy during WWII. Seen here is a celebration of the sales, held at the Camas paper mill.

Media present images, information at home of wars past and present

The first local casualty of World War II was a German shepherd. The Dec. 4, 1941, issue of the Post-Record reported that "King" died of a broken heart when his owner, Clayton Rudesill, left to California for active duty.

"The big shepherd, whose contributions to humanity included the saving of one child's life, and who has the apprehension of one burglar to his credit, was widely known among local fishermen."

"Life without the affection and attention of his adoring family apparently was worse than death. Having lost the will to live, King is dead."

With the current conflict underway and the number of casualties as reported by the mainstream television news media rise daily, many are looking back, remembering those who fought before — and those who never came home.

While Iraqi President Saddam Hussein set up military operations in civilian areas of Baghdad, many of the nearly five million residents fled from the city by whatever means was available.

In a broadcast on CNN immediately following the United States' initial attack on a "target of opportunity," a reporter described the city in those early hours of the morning as empty, save one lone dog running down the street.

These vignettes beg answers to many questions. How many Iraqis, Americans and British will lose loved ones in the days, weeks and months ahead? And how many families of Baghdad have been forced to abandon their pets, houses and daily routines to seek safety?

Television and the World Wide Web have brought these second-by-second pictures, film footage and stories straight into people's homes — so they may follow the conflict first-hand despite thousands of miles of separation.

During World War II, news came in the form of radio or newspaper — however, day-to-day living brought the

battle a little bit closer.

At the onset of US involvement in the conflict, headlines like "Telephone visiting being discouraged," and "Schools plan evacuations tomorrow," shouted from the front page of the Post-Record.

Descriptions of what to do in the event of a blackout or air raid warning were detailed by then-mayor of Camas, H.J. Woodworth, who also took on the role of director of civilian defense in the area.

"All air raid warnings will be by means of the Camas paper mill whistles; one long continuous blast of the paper mill whistle will mean that an air raid is about to commence, and one long and one short blast of the paper mill whistle will mean the air raid is over," read the Post-Record.

Residents were directed to immediately turn off all lights and cover windows where turning off lights was impractical. Marked in black ink across the page, the direction noted that if one was not at home in the event of an air raid, he or she should go directly home

and remain inside quietly. Day and night vigils were set up, with civilians manning 24-hour posts — set to report all movement of airplanes overhead.

County commissioners suspended all public dances and requested that all private activities — such as the Lions-Kiwanis dance — be cancelled too.

Other advice given by the mayor included: "Do not circulate rumors...Take with a grain of salt communiques of the enemy," and "Be calm at all times. Panic is a weapon of the enemy."

While many of these precautionary measures may seem absurd in America today, stop and listen to the eerie sounds of air raid sirens blasted over the streets of the metropolitan center of Baghdad. Yesterday's wartime life in Camas and Washougal may be very similar to reality for many overseas residents today.



Ration card belonging to Camas resident Donald Ramsey.

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Residents remember WWII life

□ Though aged 60 years, locals' memories of WWII still remain vivid and close

Working out at the gym. Eating dinner. Walking the dog.

The where's and what's of daily activities have been engrained in everyone's mind twice in the past few years — where they were when the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks occurred, and what they were doing when President Bush's spokesman Ari Fleischer announced the move to disarm Iraq had begun.

For many young local residents, this is the first time of their adult lives that they've experienced war. Others have lived through numerous conflicts — some were even children when World War II started. Each time the memories — the where's and when's — have been burned into their past.

"I can remember walking up Main Street, and the place was completely vacant except one inebriated guy walking up the street with a cowbell in one hand and a bottle of whiskey in the other," said Washougal resident Darrell Alder.

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— Darrell Alder, Washougal resident

When the United States entered into the Second World War, Alder was 14 years old and a freshman at Washougal High School.

He said, though his parents explained to him that the Southwest Washington region was relatively insignificant, he was scared that they would be bombed any second — a common feeling among his peers.

Sister and brother Hughie and Don Burris, ages 13 and 11 respectively at the onset of the war, both said they remember sitting in front of the family's small, brown radio on Dec. 7, 1941.

Both children grew up in Washougal — Burris has since moved to Vancouver, and Hughie resides in Camas.

They said their parents never sat down with them and explained what was happening, that was not commonly done at that time.

Burris said he remembered a fierce patriotism among his classmates, and with them he drove around and collected scrap metal for the aluminum drives — materials that helped build weaponry and other machinery for military.

"We put a big pile right in front of the school," Burris said. "We scoured the countryside. Those old farmers, they wouldn't get rid of anything."

Residents also remember how goods were rationed. Items like gasoline, butter, meat and shoes all came in a limited supply.

Each household was only allowed 5 gallons of gas per month, which Hughie said he and his family pooled to give to his grandfather, the only person with an automobile.

"I remember I was growing so fast, we used up our shoe rations," Burris said. "My feet hurt all the time — and I've still got crooked toes."

Local industry had a hand in the war effort right along with school children.

The Camas paper mill gave up many male employees to fight overseas. A brochure published by Crown Zellerbach in 1942 documented letters from Camas mill employees serving their country.

"I'm proud of my uniform. Proud to be able to wear it," read a letter from Edgar Duman. "Am getting tired of sunshine and would like a little Camas rain for a change. Now isn't that something?"